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great masterpiece of the so-called Isidor, — which embodied and elaborated all the clumsier efforts of previous years, invented a series of new documents of the utmost importance, and left to the more cunning workmen of succeeding centuries little to do but to revise and extend. Herr Baxmann dismisses the Isidorian Decretals with scarcely a page, and that, too, after acknowledging that they were the “most important of all the forgeries, and fraught with the most serious consequences to the world’s history.” He enters into no discussion as to their probable cause, beyond saying in a general way that they were due to the tendencies of the time. It is one of the most interesting questions of that period, whether the Isidorian Decretals were an offspring of Papal policy, or simply a *bona fide* effort, on the part of certain priests in France, to free themselves from the domination of their metropolitans. Herr Baxmann offers no theory of any kind in regard to this point; and a still more striking fault is his failure to give any references to the best modern work.

Much has been done in Germany to clear up the mystery which has hitherto enveloped the origin of the false Decretals. In Sybel’s *Zeitschrift* for 1861 and 1862 there are two able essays by Karl van Noorden and Julius Weiszäcker, the latter being especially noticeable. Herr Baxmann makes no mention of them, nor of other still later works, which it is possible may have been published too late for reference in his history.

It is much to be desired that the American public should have a good translation of this, which is on the whole the best history of the Papacy at its most interesting period that has yet appeared. The style is clear, and the whole work is thorough and compendious. It is also so far condensed that it has the advantage of convenient size and form, — two octavo volumes of very moderate bulk. A good translation would be even more valuable to teachers and students than to the general public, and would supply a serious want.

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4. — *Sketches and Essays.* Reprinted by permission from the Saturday Review. William Blackwood and Sons: Edinburgh and London. 1873.

THE Saturday Review does not appeal to one’s sympathies. It is arrogant, carping, ill-tempered, and frequently ill-informed. Its criticism and its wit, like its sentences, are too much in one mould, monotonous even when most clever. It suggests fearful possibilities

of a literary future in which an average excellence of execution may satisfy the demands of respectable society, without creating or advocating a single idea, except the abstract one of negation. Nevertheless, when all has been said against the *Saturday Review*, and all its faults have been abundantly exposed, the fact will still remain that it has done a world of good. It has been a terror to literary impostors. It has elevated the standard of literary work. It has done much to break down the insular prejudice of English society and its belief in its own superiority. It has heartlessly ridiculed all the most deeply rooted convictions, all the most firmly established customs, of the British matron and of the county member. For this, the public owes it a debt of gratitude which may be all the more readily acknowledged by Americans, since, of late years, the tone it has adopted towards America has been quite as civil as it has held towards any other country, including its own, and a great contrast to that which English periodicals were used to adopt. Add to this the significant fact that English dicta are no longer regarded by Americans with the same respect or fear as of old, and it is reasonable to suppose that even a *Saturday-Reviewer* may count upon a very friendly reception among Americans.

Among the sketches reprinted in this little volume, whose author still persists in his incognito, are some which have already gone the rounds of the American press. That on "Weddings and Wedding-Presents" is one of these, and, although human memory is utterly inadequate to the task of recalling the contents of old newspapers, there is here and there an expression or a paragraph in several of the other sketches which has surely had a certain degree of vogue in American journals. But the four essays on London schools, with which the volume begins, are not familiar. The author appears to have been one of the sixty or seventy inspectors appointed by the Education Department in the spring of 1871 to visit and report upon the efficiency of the London elementary schools, some three thousand in number. His first sketch is an account of what he calls "adventure schools," where the teacher gained a livelihood by his or her vocation. A large proportion of these are "dames' schools," and his account of them is very suggestive and highly amusing : —

"There is no want of schools in the neighborhood, such as they are. In proportion to the poverty of the district is the number of day-schools. When a certain stage of pauperism has been reached, recourse is had either to keeping a mangle or a preparatory school, though which of the two is less productive we will not venture to say. The stock in trade required for the latter is very slight. The hire of a little room, or outhouse, or shed, at

3 s. 6 d. a week, two chairs, three low benches, four or five fragments of slate, and two torn spelling-books, constitute all that is necessary. The education of others is a last resource when all other means of livelihood have failed. The consequence is that the dames inveigh loudly against one another, and complain of the seduction of infants to their neighbors' back-kitchens. It is a generally received opinion that any place is good enough for children, and the opinion is one which is acted upon. The schools, however, of the poorer class perform a certain service in keeping their tenants out of the streets for five hours during the day. Many are baby-refuges, where there is hardly any question of instruction, and the old lady in charge very truly says that she is no 'scholar, and just teaches the alphabet.' Sometimes the whole of the front and back parlor is devoted to the purposes of teaching, and forty children may be seen propped up against one another, whilst in the middle, rolling about the floor, admirably fenced in by the barrier of elder children, are a dozen babies between one and three years of age, with their hands well fixed in each other's hair. Sometimes the room is a cellar, so dark that a little time must elapse before the eye gets accustomed to the want of light, and through the dirt and *débris* and bedding which encumber the entrance, a passage can be made to the school, which turns out to be the fender, upon which three miserable-looking children are sitting, unconscious of instruction, and playing with the cat."

The English are modest enough about their educational system, or want of system, and it is not for Americans to throw stones at them so long as their own glass house in the Southern States remains in its present shape. These sketches of the deplorable condition of primary education in London are, therefore, only curious as showing what a task the British government has undertaken in its attempt to construct a satisfactory mechanism for educating the children of the poor in its great cities. According to the new standard, all these dames' schools, with few exceptions, are to disappear. One would think that this would be an unmitigated blessing, yet it falls with crushing weight upon some two thousand teachers in London who at least deserve pity. "No small amount of interest," says the writer, "attaches itself to the dame who keeps thirty children out of the streets, and herself from pauperism, by her exertions, and who says without complaint that she supposes she shall go to the workhouse when her school is taken away from her." No wonder that their temper was sometimes ruffled. One is inclined to sympathize with the "infuriated woman with dishevelled curls who runs into the middle of the road and says that 'it is worse than the Inquisition, that it is outrageous, most outrageous, and that she well knows the tricks of government, whose desire it is to shut up all other schools in order to fill its own.'"

Of the other eight or nine sketches, all of which deal with national

customs or fashions in the usual tone of the Saturday Review, that on country-houses is to be cordially recommended to the American public. Addison and Irving have much to answer for in having spread a certain halo of sentiment over the intolerable dulness of an English country-house. The English themselves in their struggles to overcome this dulness have developed the style of festivity which is described by the reviewer, and which many Americans believe to be the ideal perfection of human society. But there are accents of truth in the description here given which, with all the acknowledged cynicism of the Saturday, must certainly come from the heart : —

“ Nothing, perhaps, is more trying to the nerves than the arrival [at the country-house], and the entry into a half-lit drawing-room, where through the fog can be seen dimly teacups and bonneted women. You search for your hostess in vain, and eventually discuss the dangers of your journey with your host, whom it is needless to say you have never spoken to before. After seeing four relays of women drink tea, the unhappy guest is conducted through innumerable catacombs, up countless stairs, down corridors like the galleries of a coal-pit, to what proves to be somebody else’s bedroom. The search continues and is at last rewarded by success. More troubles may, however, attend him. A neighboring grandee has been waited for, and dinner does not take place till half past eight o’clock. . . . The ball takes place on the following evening. Hostesses declare that they must hold out some attraction and offer some excuse for the formation of a party. It is cruel to drag a man away from his business or his pleasures in order that he may take part in rational conversation, live with agreeable people, or see a beautiful country. He must either shoot away three hundred cartridges each morning, and thus retire to bed with a consciousness of a well-spent day, or he must be taken to a ball. . . . To shoot all day, to dance all night, and wear curiously colored stockings, will thus have been the occupation of the typical guest. Even should he share Mr. Freeman’s views, self-defence will probably drive him into the shooting-party. The alternative is fearful to contemplate. Driven from his bedroom by the housemaids, from the library by the children of the house, the victim loses all presence of mind, and, after luncheon, is ultimately induced to accept, with apparent cordiality, the proposition that he should take a walk. Four girls and one chaperon, attended by the victim, whose trembling hands open successive iron gates, pace three times round the pond, or twice up and down the avenue, till, cold and muddy, he returns to find the same assemblage of women and teacups.”

And yet, “ without a periodical influx of guests, an Englishman’s house would not only be his castle, but also his lunatic asylum.” The ponderous English social system, now almost the only complete system of aristocratic society left in Europe, continues to *fonctionner* under these trying conditions, and Americans, even of the shoddy class, yearn for no social position more ardently than for that of an

inside spectator of the ducal or noble mansion. And they are quite right if they look at it as they look at the party-colored legs of the *guardia nobile* at Rome, as a curious and somewhat grotesque relic of a historical past, which deserves to be seen. Even in this case, however, they must always bear in mind a remark of Horace Walpole's which contained a profound social truth: "The most remarkable thing I have observed since I came abroad is that there are no people so obviously mad as the English. . . . If one could avoid contracting this queerness, it must certainly be most entertaining to live in England." The *Saturday Reviewer*, considering him as a type, has been struck like Walpole with the first of these facts, and if he succeeded in following Walpole's advice, and "avoided contracting that queerness," he would be less amusing than he now is.

5. — *Life of Thomas Jefferson*. By JAMES PARTON. Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co. 1874.

FROM 1783 to 1801 is the most interesting period in our history. Six years were passed in making a "hoop for the thirteen staves"; and then came the struggle between the past and the future, — between the old English theory of government by the educated and the wealthy, and the new French doctrine of the sovereignty of that mysterious entity, the people; wise, virtuous, and infallible by divine right.

The men who dealt with these grave matters were men of conduct and of rare endowments; men who presented a large variety of types of character, and had each a distinct and yet visible existence of his own. This is true not only of the grand figures in the front rank, but also of the *Dii Minores*, like Burr, Fisher Ames, Barlow, Pinckney, Gerry, Rutledge; very different in this respect from the *fortis Gyas* and *fortis Cloanthus* class who occupy their places to-day.

It was our heroic age. The American Walter Scott, when he comes, cannot do better than to select this picturesque period for the great American novel that has so often been announced.

In the mean time Mr. Parton has made good use of the period in various monographs. His *Life of Aaron Burr*, in choice of incident, skilful arrangement, and lively narrative, is a model of its kind. It deserves the compliment paid by Dumas to Lamartine's *Girondins*; it is biography *élevée à la hauteur du roman*. Mr. Parton has not kept up to this standard of excellence in the *Life of Jefferson*, a republication from the "*Atlantic Monthly*." It may be said in his